

Complimentary Allusions: Shawl Scenes in Rossellini, Lean, Fellini, Kubrick, and Bertolucci Films

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Abstract : In the film's famous scene (Roma città aperta-1945), Pina (Anna Magnani) collapses in the street when machined-gunned by a German soldier. Her son Marcello (Vito Annchiarico) tries to revive her. Her death is signaling not closure, but the cycle of life; Marcello saves Francesco with the shawl taken from his mother's corpse. One pivotal scene in Brief Encounter (1945) occurs in the apartment of Alec's (Trevor Howard) friend Stephen (Valentine Dyall), when Stephen returns to catch Alec and Laura (Celia Johnson) together alone. David Lean directs this scene using her shawl as a sign of in flagrante delicto. In La Strada (1954), Gelsomina (Giulietta Masina) was waving good bye when her mother sensing impending doom changed her mind and desperately tried to stop her waving back with her shawl: Don't go my daughter! Your shawl! Your shawl! Gelsomina refuses to return, waving back: It's time to go! Stanley Kubrick's tale of a boxer who crosses a mobster to win the heart of a lady, Killer's Kiss (1955), reminds us that Times Square used to contain sweaty boxing gyms and dance halls. The film's longest Times Square interlude is its oddest: the boxer Davie Gordon played by Jamie Smith has his shawl stolen by two playful men in Shriners' hats who are silent except for one who blows a harmonica, faintly heard over honking cabs and overheard conversations. This long sequence appears to be joining in on directors' shawl conversations with Kubrick's own twist. Principle characters will never know why all this happened to them that evening. Love, death, happiness and everlasting misery all of that is caused by Dave's shawl. Finally, the decade of cinematic shawl conversations conclude in Bertolucci's Before the Revolution (Prima della rivoluzione-1964). One of his character's lifts up a shawl asking if this was a Rossellini's shawl. I argue that exploring complimentary allusions in a film where directors are acknowledging their own great debt to another film or filmmaker will further our knowledge of film history adding both depth and resonance to the great works in cinema.

Keywords : allusions, Bertolucci, Fellini, homage, Kubrick, lean, Rossellini

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